

Every Slimer has his day

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Please allow me to introduce a slugfest of a game that involves no fisticuffs of any kind, and not very much metal. Puzzled? Exactly!



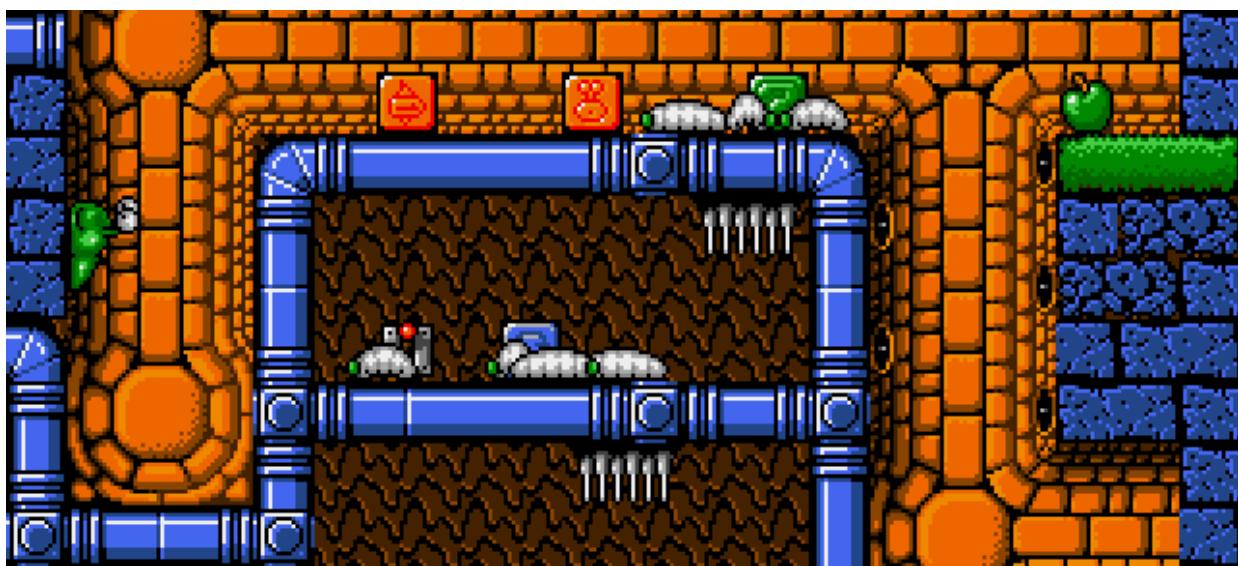
You play as 'Steg'. He's a slug. Meet Steg the Slug. Ignoring the fact that slugs are hermaphrodite, you're a single dad battling against the harsh realities of rearing five young sluglings in a world hobbled by limited food supplies while possessing no arms or legs with which to transport the meagre rations he can scavenge. Regardless, it's our paternal duty to ensure t'yungunz (a butchered Yorkshire colloquialism for 'the young ones') are provided with sufficient grubs to sustain their busy high-rolling lifestyles. Yep, some slugs are actually carnivorous, folks.



We achieve this by blowing bubbles, enveloping the crawling organic meal deals, causing them to float up the vertically scrolling levels to become our hungry brood's next tasty morsel. As they become nutritionally deprived, their eyelids droop and sleep overwhelms them. Nevertheless, a precisely airlifted wriggler has the power to revive them, making our babies alert and wide awake once more.



This would be child's play were it not for the treacherous obstacles looming overhead waiting to pop our delicate delivery mechanisms, landing the grubs right back at square one and us scrambling for time. Bubbles automatically head in the right general direction, though it's down to us to chaperone them safely around hazards such as spikes, billows, fire, and glass, nudging or blowing the wayward critters accordingly.

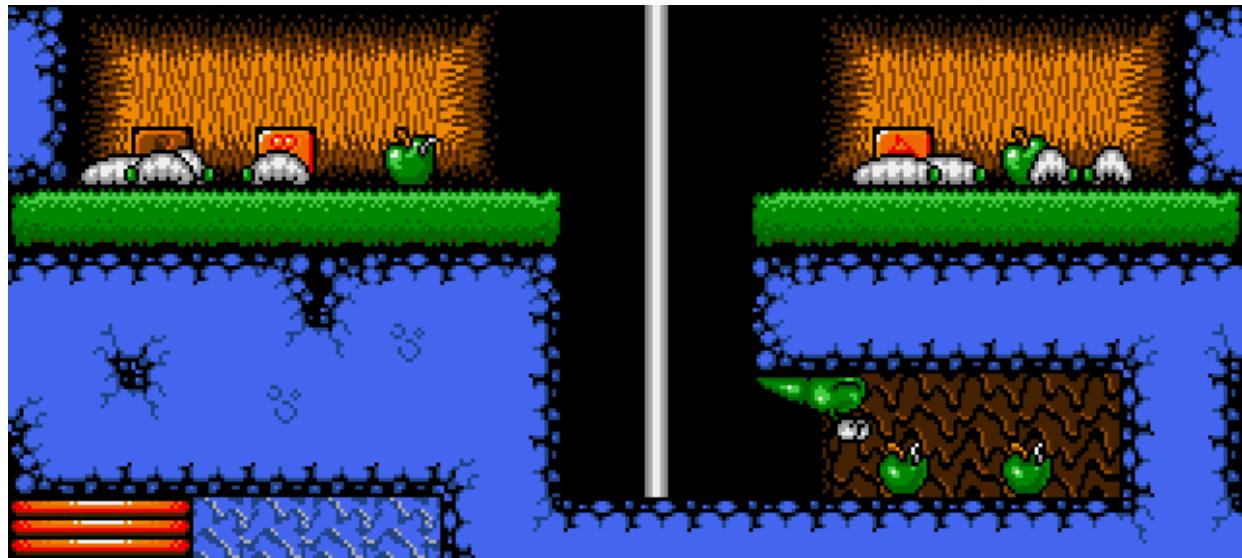


As with the majority of Codemasters' offerings, it's a budget title, this time developed by The Big Red Software Company who previously collaborated with the Darling brothers in producing Prince Of The Yolkfolk, Dizzy Panic and Wacky Darts prior to being acquired by Eidos in 1995.



Steg's eponymous action-puzzler spans 10 levels, and multiple home computer formats including the Spectrum, Amstrad, C64, Atari ST and Amiga. The latter was courtesy of coders, Gary Symons and Terry Mancey, graphician, Brian Hartley, and musician, Darren Ithell.

The rather sedate action plays out in the delectable milieu of a slime-ridden sewer, meandering subterranean tunnels and dank caverns, as you might expect following in the, erm, footsteps (?) of a mucilaginous gastropod. Entering the fray empty-handed as nature intended, Steg is no superhero, yet suped-up with the snazziest gizmos the Acme Bionic Bitz 'n' Pieces catalogue has to offer, he's a force to be reckoned with.



If clambering up the walls and vacuuming ourself to the ceiling isn't enough to bring home the bacon, the Super Genie Rocket Pack...



...Acme Bionic Steg Legs, Nitrous Oxide Speed Up Pills, or disappointingly uncapitalised scuba diving set, should really put a spring in our squelch!



Once collected, special power-ups can be dropped again with the return key having served their purpose. For instance, the Robolegs will allow us to run and jump like Usain Bolt, yet will also prevent Steg from scaling the walls Flood-style as in our default modus operandi.



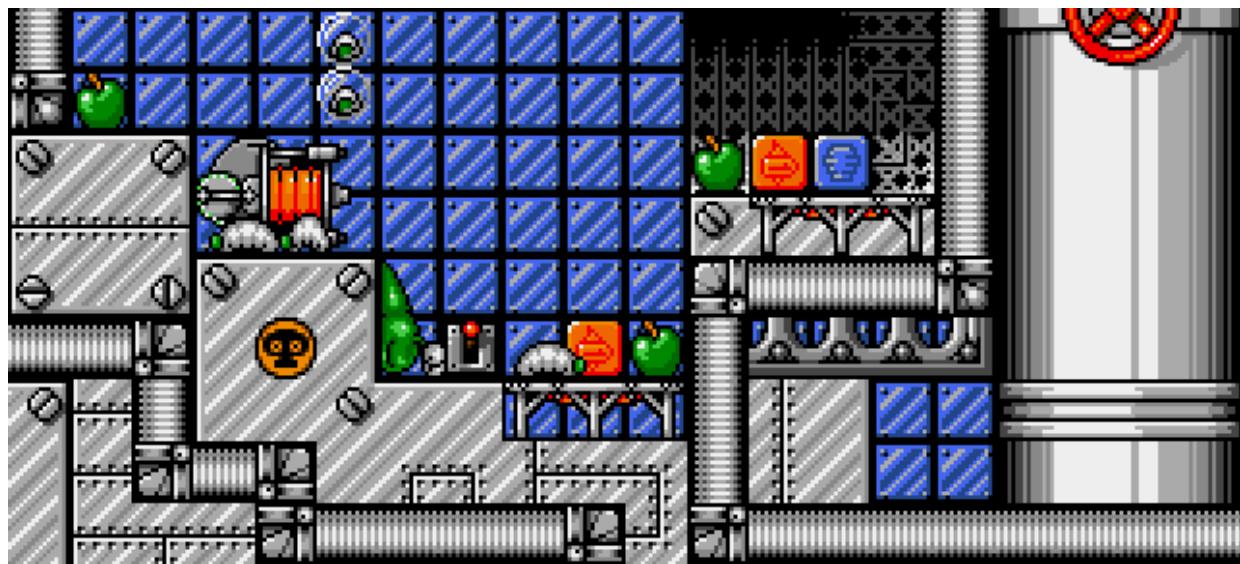
It's game over when our energy is exhausted through colliding with hazards (at which point we sprout wings and fly to heaven).



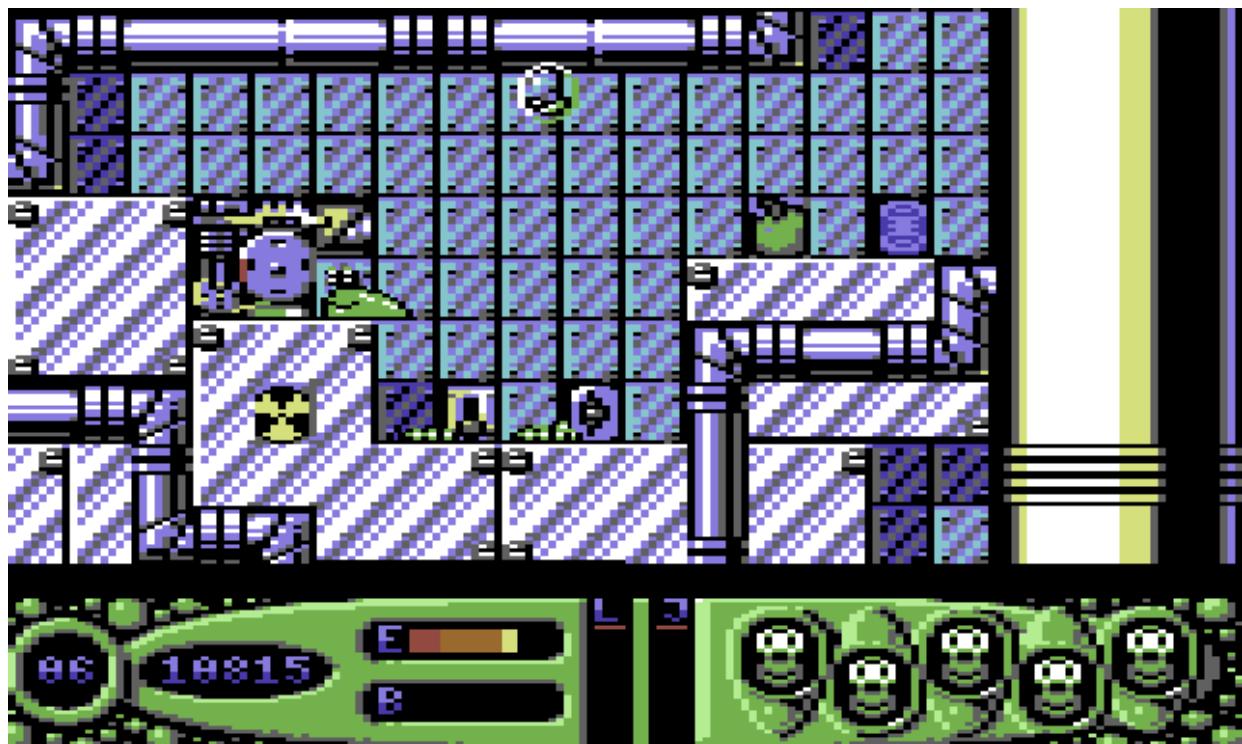
Alternatively when our offspring die of starvation, their HUD avatars having been replaced with gravestones (as occurs when Squiffy - star of Flood - dies).



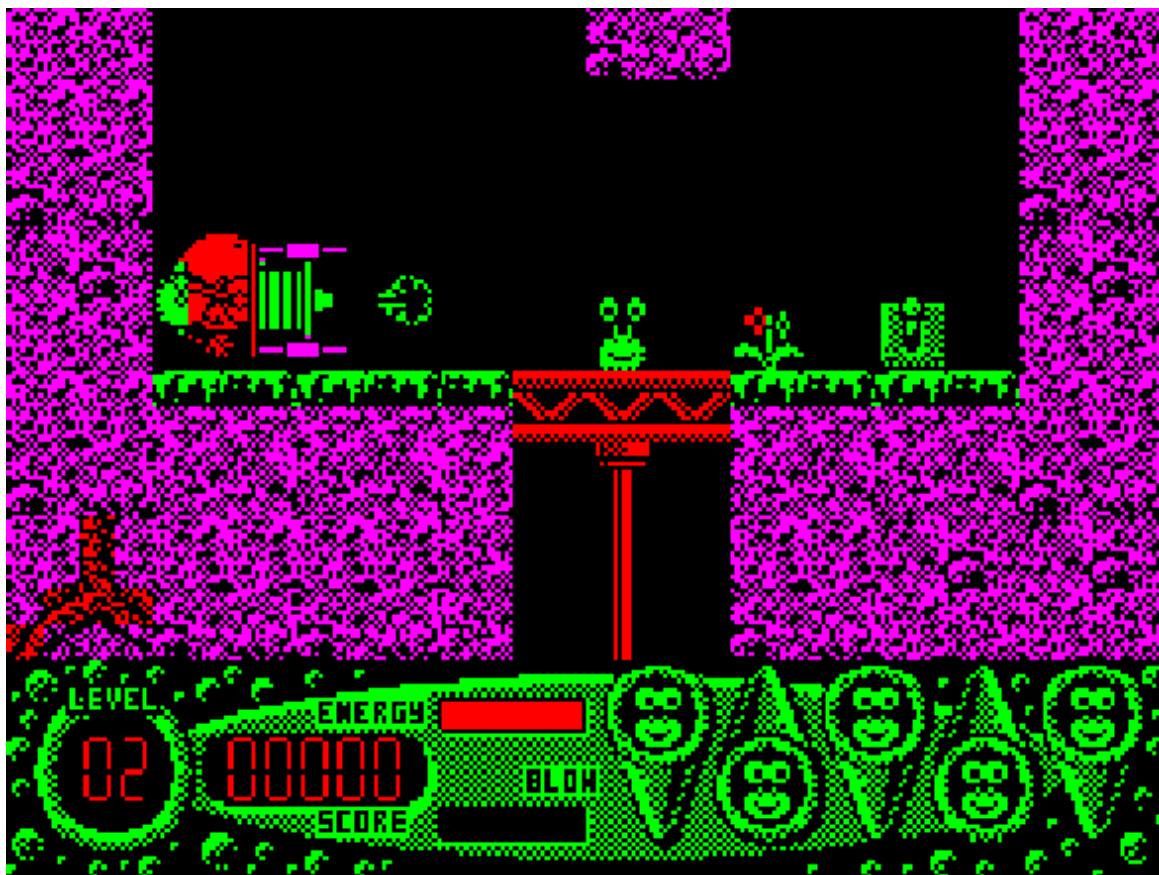
Seeing as our kin won't always be in view as we forage for tucker, this is inevitably a common occurrence. Luckily our own energy isn't a finite resource; it can be restored by munching on apples and the like.



Gameplay between the various formats is almost identical, whilst certain key differences exist in the presentation. The humble art of blowing bubbles expends energy in the C64 edition obliging us to conserve our puff as much as possible.



Amstrad users received a pretty poor Speccy port featuring a handful of colours and a scroll rate of treacle-treading proportions. That said, it *does* include the spontaneous cycling of monochrome cave wall colours, which is, erm, odd. Ironically, the Speccy incarnation runs much smoother. Still, no green blood unfortunately... slugs have green blood, that's a true factoid trivia fans.



Over on the 16-bit systems, graphics are more detailed as we'd hope and true backdrops supplant the Stygian void. Scrolling in both the Atari ST and Amiga versions is juddery, though this could easily be a deliberate reflection of Steg's stuttery, plodding locomotion. He's a slug after all; essentially a snail who's misplaced his mobile home.



A useful password system is in place for all editions, making it a breeze to pick up where we left off rather than having to start again from scratch.



Despite being pipped to the post by Dennis Drew's DOS game, Giant Space Slug, Steg is highly original for a Codemasters offering. Nonetheless, it *does* appear to have

been influenced significantly by ERE Informatique's Bubble Ghost released in 1988...



...and One Man and His Droid by Mastertronic, dating back to 1985. Before setting up Codemasters in 1986, the Darling brothers supplied the latter with games developed under their Galactic Software label so would likely already be familiar with One Man and His Droid. This may have had a bearing, who knows?



Still, it's not a pseudo-simulator of any kind (unless maggot herding is now a novelty sport?), and for a cheapy it's well presented and pretty good fun in short bursts. Full marks then must be awarded to the Codies for taking a punt by backing something slightly off-kilter. Who'd have thought anyone would be capable of empathising with the plight of a downtrodden slug? Even so, Steg hardly set the world ablaze, only reaching no. 17 in the budget charts in October 1992.

A couple of reviews written at the time suggested Steg would return for a sequel, only this failed to materialise. Perhaps a snail mail spammer pushed a Domino's Pizza menu through his letterbox and he finally got to put his foot up?

